

# CAPITOL HILL UPDATE

REP. JIM GERLACH (PA-06)

Friday, May 13, 2005

[www.gerlach.house.gov](http://www.gerlach.house.gov)

## House cracks down on gang violence

### *Saving America's Cities*



(left), Rep. Gerlach listens to Speaker Hastert. (below) Rep. Gerlach engages Valerie Lemmie, city manager of Cincinnati, Ohio, in a discussion about economic development.



*Revisiting a role he held last Congress, Rep. Gerlach participated in a recent meeting of the Saving America's Cities Working Group. Chaired by Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert, the working group was formed to explore various ways of encouraging economic growth in America's inner cities.*

**WASHINGTON**-Gang violence is a growing problem no longer isolated to the dark street corners of our nation's inner cities and populated urban areas. Gangs of the most violent nature are operating in our schools, our neighborhoods and communities with no regard for the laws of justice that govern our lives.

It's a problem that, despite a decrease in the number of overall violent crimes nationally, continues to steadily worsen. According to a recent National Youth Gang survey of local law enforcement officials from around the country, 42 percent said their problem with gangs was getting worse, not better. We need to give law enforcement officials better tools and weapons

to fight this problem.

On May 11, Congressman Gerlach joined a bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives in passing *the Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005*. This legislation will increase federal funding for law enforcement efforts at all levels to combat gang violence and will go a long way toward ridding our communities of violent gangs and returning peace and order to our streets and neighborhoods.

The United States Department of Justice estimates that there are more than 25,000 active gangs and some 750,000 active gang members throughout the country.

*see Gangs*

## War on Terror Update: Addressing the needs of our first responders

**WASHINGTON** -- Ensuring effective and sufficient funding for our first responders is one of Congress's highest priorities. On Thursday, Congressman Gerlach joined an overwhelming bipartisan majority in the House in voting for the Faster and Smarter

Funding for First Responders Act of 2005. This legislation provides priority assistance to first responders facing the greatest risk and streamlines terrorism preparedness grants.

"We need to make sure that the fire departments and



emergency personnel in the

most high-risk areas are able to get the funding they need to keep their communities safe and their neighborhoods secure," Rep. Gerlach said. "This important legislation will all us to more efficiently streamline federal dollars

*see First Responders*

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## *War on Terror Update: Addressing the needs of our first responders*



### *First Responders*

to regions throughout the country that are most at risk for acts of terrorism.”

***The Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005*** also requires the establishment of specific, flexible, and measurable goals for first responders, and encourages states and localities to pool resources for regional benefit, all while following the valued

recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

“The bipartisan 9/11 Commission made many recommendations last year and the last two Congresses have made significant process in implementing the commission’s guidelines. We’ve also invested billions in securing the homeland and fighting the war on terror.”

The legislation makes common-sense changes aimed to help to eliminate unnecessary delays and the waste and abuse of valuable homeland security dollars. Additionally, instead of waiting until funds are received to begin planning on how to spend them, the homeland security plans of those receiving grants must

be in place before they are awarded taxpayers money.

Furthermore, grant applications will be required to fit statewide homeland security plans and specify exactly how funds will be spent. States must then make grant awards to first responders within 45 days or face penalties for their delay.



### *Gangs*

Many any of these gangs are involved in running high-level prostitution rings, selling stolen property and trafficking illegal guns and drugs. Many of the most infamous gangs are highly structured and are operating very much like organized crime syndicates. ***The Gang Deterrence and Community Protection Act of 2005*** will authorize the spending of more than \$388 million for law enforcement officials at all levels to combat gangs and rid our streets of the violence and fear these gangs breed.

Additionally, the legislation includes harsher penalties for gang members perpetrating horrific crimes against society, including mandatory life sentences or death for any gang-

related crime that results in a death. The legislation imposes mandatory minimum sentences of more than 30 years for instances of kidnapping, aggravated sexual assault and maiming and mandatory minimum sentences of 20 years for assaults resulting in serious bodily injury. This legislation will also extend the statute of limitations for violent crimes, increase penalties for criminal use of firearms in crimes of violence or drug trafficking and allow authorities to try more 16- and 17-year-old gang members as adults. Authorities have told us that the threat of harsher penalties is an absolutely critical tool to have available in order to get lower level gang members to implicate their fellow members.

## *Capitol Hill Update Show Schedule*

***Be sure to catch Congressman Jim Gerlach’s cable television show, Capitol Update. This month’s program features footage from the Congressman’s recent farmland preservation events at farms in Chester and Berks Counties.***

***Lower Merion Channel 7: M/W/F -- 12:30 AM, 8:30 AM, 8:30 PM and 12:30 PM on T/TH/SAT/SUN. PCTV Channel 54: SATs at 8:30 PM BCTV (Berks County): Check local listings***

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